

BRAVO!

WANDERERS

**OFF TO
A FLYER**

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 4, Pistoiese 0

WYCOMBE Wanderers could hardly have wished for a better start to their Anglo-Italian Inter-league Semi-Professional campaign on Tuesday night against Pistoiese. A goal up at half time, the Blues destroyed the Italians with a marvellous display of attacking football that produced three more goals.

Wanderers knew only too well that a home victory over this Italian League Division 3 side was imperative if they were to stand a chance of taking the trophy and gold medals that go with it. The games in Italy next month will obviously be far more difficult and three home points from this game could be decisive.

Pistoiese also realised that if they could hold Wycombe at Loakes Park, they too, could be in with a chance at the finish. Bolstering their defence, they used only two men up front but their tactics came unstuck after half time and in the end, they finished well beaten.

For the first 45 minutes Pistoiese looked a useful side, breaking quickly and soaking up pressure effectively. But after the second goal they went to pieces, gave away a string of free kicks and also a penalty. To make it a thoroughly unhappy night, full back Hermes Fergonas was booked for persistent fouling, a caution which will cost the club £100 out of the £500 donated to each club by Rothmans.

This was Wycombe's night from the start. As soon as the national anthems were over, they got down to the task in hand and were a goal up after only 12 minutes — a great psychological breakthrough. The man responsible was skipper John Delaney, who had a marvellous 90 minutes and led his team by personal example. John seems to rise to the occasion in these Anglo-Italian matches — he did against Monza this season — and has always had a soft spot for the Italians after scoring the first ever goal for the England Amateur team against Italy a few years ago. He went on to add another on that particular night.

But Delaney wasn't the only hero. Keith Mead was as consistent as ever while Mick Holifield had his best game for some time in midfield. Up front Dylan Evans was vastly improved and always dangerous while Geoff Anthony worked as hard as anyone against an uncompromising defence. To cap it all, Terry Reardon came up with a truly brilliant third goal which we'll remember for years.

Wanderers went all out for goals but they had to keep a careful eye on Marino Rakar, whose pace and skill always looked dangerous, especially on the break. Rakar was substituted at half time and Pistoiese never



regained their momentum up front.

Faced by a blanket defence, it was obvious Wycombe had to take the initiative and go all out for an early goal to force Pistoiese out of their defensive shell. Delaney provided just that after 12 minutes. Holifield's corner was cleared to Reardon, whose shot was blocked. Anthony then played the ball back to Delaney who drove a first time shot into the corner.

This had the desired effect on Pistoiese, who now had to score themselves to stand a chance of achieving the draw they came for. They almost got that equaliser after 23 minutes when Rakar ran onto Riccardo Bertini's fine through ball, which put him clear of the defence. Only the positioning of John Maskell, who came out to narrow the angle, saved a goal, John stuck out a hand to deflect Rakar's weak shot away.

But it was Wycombe who looked more likely to find the target, especially when goalkeeper Giovane De Min gave away a free kick for 'steps'. He was penalised twice in the match but both times the shots were blocked. Maskell was also pulled up once but again, the defensive wall did its job.

Before half time, Delaney went close with a header inches over the crossbar while Rakar flicked a shot just past a post from a quick throw-in. Dave Alexander came on after 42 minutes for Howard Kennedy and quickly added spark to midfield.

At half time though, Wanderers had only the one goal to show for their efforts and Pistoiese were still dangerous enough to suggest another even 45 minutes after the break. What transpired, in fact, was a great display by the Blues which took the Italians completely by surprise.

Holifield gave a sign of things to come with a powerful run and

shot after 52 minutes and three minutes later Wanderers scored the vital second goal which signalled the end of the Pistoiese challenge. Anthony created the chance by winning possession in the box and firing in a shot which turned into a perfect pass for Evans at the far post. Dylan slid the ball home to make it 2-0.

The second goal took much of the pressure off the Blues, who were now able to relax. The Pistoiese heads began to go down and the match ended as a contest when Reardon came up with a superb goal in the 66th minute. Terry scored a fine goal against Barking last week but this one must count as one of his best ever. De Min punched a corner out of the area to Reardon, some 22 yards from goal. Without hesitation, Terry let fly with his left foot and sent a glorious volley over the defence and goalkeeper, right into the net. It was the type of goal that comes off once a season and it couldn't have been scored at a better time.

With the match well and truly sewn up, Wycombe were able to play possession football for the rest of the half but chances still came thick and fast. Both Holifield and Evans went close before Wanderers made it 4-0 after 77 minutes. Tony Horseman was almost smothered by Otello Ganthaler inside the penalty area and referee Alan Turvey immediately pointed to the spot. Dave Alexander hit the penalty up the slope to drive the final nail into the Pistoiese coffin.

Evans could have made it five with a header in the closing stages but few people were complaining after such a marvellous second half performance. News came through later of Enfield's 0-0 draw with Teramo, Wycombe's other opponents in group B of the tournament. Teramo could well be more difficult on May 19 but on this form, Wanderers will take some stopping. It was a shame only 1,500 people turned out to support the town's side on this night, for they were a credit to High Wycombe and non-league football.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; H. Kennedy (sub. D. Alexander 42 mins.); T. Reardon, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, D. Evans, G. Anthony. Subs. P. Spittle, B. Macrae, D. Bullock (not used).

PISTOIESE: G. De Min; A. Crema, O. Ganthaler, L. Menconi, H. Fergonas; S. Agresti, F. Corigliano, L. Farina (sub. D. Borgioli 80 mins), R. Bertini; E. Amendola, M. Rakar (sub. G. Quadri 45 mins). Subs. S. Settini, L. Tonani (not used).

Referee: A. Turvey.

Half-time: 1-0. Goalscorers, Wycombe — Delaney (12), Evans (55), Reardon (61), Alexander pen. (77).

Official attendance: 1,500.